

Childcare Services for Military/Veteran Families

About Technical Assistance Briefs. The MCH Evidence Center provides ongoing technical assistance (TA) to Title V agencies related to the emerging evidence base, strategies, and measures related to many topics interconnected with National Performance Measures and other critical topics in MCH. *Technical Assistance Briefs* are an outcome of these TA sessions that are designed to act as *conversation starters* in thinking about programs that can be developed to address issues that affect women, infants, children, adolescents, youth, families, and communities. These briefs are not meant to be comprehensive; full analyses of the NPM topic areas are provided in [Evidence Analysis Reports](#).

The Center makes these customized briefs available during TA and on the program website to identify evidence-based/informed strategies, promising practices, examples of ESMs from the field and peer-reviewed resources. Please [contact us](#) if you would like us to develop a similar report for topics that you are working on.

Initial Query for this Brief. Identify measures and best practices around Childcare for Military/Veteran Families.

Military Child Development Program: Background and Issues *Abstract:* Child care quality, accessibility, and cost are frequent concerns for military families. This report traces the development of DOD-sponsored child care services and discusses these issues in greater depth in order to support Members of Congress in their oversight role. The next section gives an overview of DOD's justification for the CDP and demand for services. Next is a discussion of current CDP components, policies, and funding. This is followed by the legislative history of DOD-sponsored child care in the military including a discussion of recent initiatives. The final section puts forth issues and options for Congress related to oversight and funding of military child care programs. Other military family or youth recreation and enrichment programs are beyond the scope of this report.

https://www.everycrsreport.com/files/20200319_R45288_eba007d104685a18562ba3d3481bee10f617b8ff.pdf

Health and Mental Health Needs of Children in US Military Families. *Abstract:* Children who are military connected have unique needs and experiences compared with peers of the same age. These experiences often include frequent moves, prolonged separations, and deployments of family members. Although these challenges may be familiar to military and civilian health care providers working at military treatment facilities, up to 50% of children who are military connected receive care in the civilian sector.¹⁻³ The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) clinical report "Health and Mental Health Needs of Children in US Military Families" was published in 2013 to assist pediatric health care providers who care for military children who have been affected by deployment.⁴ In that report, the cycle of deployment was described as well as the common reactions to deployment and the effects of wartime deployment on children at different developmental stages. Age-based recommendations were provided to assist family members, and additional resources were provided to assist pediatricians.

<https://www.publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article-split/143/1/e20183258/37244/Health-and-Mental-Health-Needs-of-Children-in-US>

Military Child Care: Off-Base Financial Assistance and Wait Lists for On-Base Care. *Abstract:* The U.S. Department of Defense DOD operates the countrys largest employer-sponsored child care program, providing care to more than 210,000 children of military families in fiscal year 2019, according to DOD. Most of these children are cared for in subsidized child development centers on military bases, but some off-base child care providers receive subsidies on behalf of military families to reduce those families costs for care. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 the Act required DOD to assess and report on its financial assistance to these providers, as well as its efforts to reduce wait lists for on-base childcare. Specifically, the Act required DOD to assess whether the maximum amount of assistance provided to off-base providers should be standardized across the services, and whether the maximum amount adequately accounts for high-cost duty stations. It also requires the Secretary of Defense to take any steps necessary to reduce wait lists for on-base child care, and identify any additional resources needed to increase access to child development centers.

<https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/AD1149469>

Be All that We Can Be: Lessons from the Military for Improving out Nation’s Child Care System.

Abstract: In response to increasing demands for military child care and lack of comprehensive care standards, the Military Child Care Act of 1989 (MCCA) mandated improvements in military child care. Today, the Department of Defense runs a model child care system serving over 200,000 children daily at over 300 locations worldwide. Noting that most of the problems characterizing military child care before the MCCA abound in non-military child care today, this report examines the specific ways in which the military made significant improvements in its child care system. The report describes the military's approach to improving quality, keeping care affordable to parents, and expanding availability. Following a brief look at military child care before the MCCA, the report discusses the following key lessons for civilian child care: (1) It is possible to take a woefully inadequate system and dramatically improve it over a relatively short period of time; (2) To achieve progress, it is necessary to acknowledge the seriousness of the problem and the consequences of inaction; (3) Improve quality by establishing and enforcing comprehensive standards, assisting providers in becoming accredited, and enhancing provider compensation and training; (4) Keep parent fees affordable through subsidies; (5) Expand the availability of all kinds of care by continually assessing unmet need and taking steps to address it; and (6) Commit the resources necessary to get the job done. The report concludes by asserting that the lessons from the military child care system's experience convey a hopeful message to those seeking to improve child care across the United States. (KB)

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED441582>

Improving Child Care and Promoting Accreditation: The Military Model. Public Policy Report.

Abstract: Discusses the factors leading to quality improvements in military child care. Presents reasons why military child care system has been more effective than the civilian system in promoting quality. Describes the specific policies that have supported the high rate of accreditation among military child development centers. Asserts that the Military Child Care Act provided a jump-start for change. (KB)

<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ616879>

Culturally Responsive Play Therapy with Military-Connected Children and Families: Opportunities for Rigorous Research.

Abstract: Military-connected children represent intersectional identities and demonstrate unique vulnerabilities and strengths. Indeed, the wellbeing of military families is complex given stressors related to frequent separations and geographic relocations, coupled with the high-risk nature of careers in the armed forces. However, military families also demonstrate several strengths, such as resilience, that may be overlooked in the mental health interventions offered to the military community's youngest members. Previous researchers have illuminated the limitations of interventions provided to military-connected children, as well as methodological flaws that inhibit the development of exemplary practices for this population. In the article, the authors present several ways in which play therapy is responsive to the cultural values and mental health needs of military families. Additionally, the authors provide concrete strategies for play therapists and researchers to improve the rigor of play therapy research and support the efficacy of play therapy with military-connected children.

<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2021-23718-001>

Programs for Children in Military Families.

Abstract: This article reviews representative programs for families and children from each NATO and Partnership for Peace (PfP) country with a representative participating in the NATO HFM RTG-258 task group on the impact of military life on children in military families. **Methods:** Each participating country was invited to submit up to three programs targeted at military-connected children and families. **Results:** 26 programs from nine countries were reviewed and categorized into 13 typologies. **Discussion:** The number of services offered in each country appeared to be influenced by size of the military, the degree to which military life is separate or immersed in civilian life, and the access to universal and preventive health care. Program descriptions for representative programs are included, as well as recommendations for program development, evaluation, and implementation.

<https://jmvfh.utpjournals.press/doi/full/10.3138/jmvfh.2019-0011>

Needs of Military Families: Family and Educator Perspectives.

Abstract: Limited research has focused on the unique needs of military families and their preschool-age children and even less work focused on military families whose preschool children have special needs or disabilities. Researchers implemented a multicase qualitative research design conducted at two sites to gain the perspectives across all service ranks. The study included two groups of participants from each site including (a) early educators working for the school district associated with each military base, and (b) families who had been deployed within the past 5 years and had a child with a disability, or who was at risk for developing a disability, younger than the age of 8 years. Researchers used a semi-structured question protocol to align with the study's overarching purpose, theory, extant research on military families, and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) recommended practices for serving children with special needs and their families. Based on the data gathered, researchers describe professional development needs related to developing transportable detailed Individualized Family Service Plans and Individualized Education Programs, using family-centered approaches, and creating a collaborative partnership between school leadership and military command.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1053815119847235>

Zero to Three, Military Families Projects. Babies on the Homefront. *Abstract:* This resource provides military and veteran parents ideas for enhancing everyday moments with their infant or toddler. Contents include behavior tips, ideas for creating activities, and information and ideas on self-care. Parents can personalize the app with their infant’s picture and create a photo gallery of their child’s moods. Parents can sort the information by their young child’s age and specify their situation as At Home, Leaving Soon, Deployed, Home Again, a Veteran, or visiting a hospital. The app also allows access to a series of videos on parenting for military and veteran families. The resource is available in English and Spanish. A handout to share with parents and professionals is also available.

<http://babiesonthefront.org/>

Additional Relevant Resources:

- **<https://militarychildcare.com/>**
- **<https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/military-child-care-fee-assistance-programs>**
- **<https://www.militaryonesource.mil/family-relationships/parenting-and-children/childcare/child-care-the-essentials/>**
- **<https://www.childcareaware.org/fee-assistancerespice/military-families/>**
- **<https://www.militaryfamily.org/info-resources/child-care/>**
- **<https://militarybenefits.info/child-care-aware/>**
- **<https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2674140/new-pilot-program-explores-helping-military-parents-with-fee-assistance-for-in/>**

Childcare Services for Military/Veteran Families: Technical Assistance Brief

Last Updated: June, 2022

Access other resources at <https://www.mchevidence.org>

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U02MC31613, Strengthen the Evidence for Maternal and Child Health Programs, \$3.5 M. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.